

They galloped away. But there were mounted men in the main street, and one, well ahead of the others, was making towards the bridge over which they must pass. He reached it before they did, and set his horse crosswise in its narrow entrance. Pierre urged his mare in front of the girl's, and drove straight at the head and shoulders of the obstructing horse. His was the heavier animal, and it bore the other down. The rider fired as he fell, but missed, and, in an instant, Pierre and the girl were over. The fallen man fired the second time, but again missed. They had a fair start, but the open prairie was ahead of them, and there was no chance to hide. Riding must do all, for their pursuers were in full cry. For an hour they rode hard. They could see their hunters not very far in the rear. Suddenly Pierre started and sniffed the air.

"The prairie's on fire," he said exultingly, defiantly.

Almost as he spoke, clouds ran down the horizon, and then the sky lighted up. The fire travelled with incredible swiftness: they were hastening to meet it. It came on wave-like, hurrying down at the right and the left as if to close in on them. The girl spoke no word; she had no fear: what Pierre did she would do. He turned round to see his pursuers: they had wheeled and were galloping back the way they came.